

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church

Shobonier, Illinois

Easter 6C

May 25, 2025

John 16.23-33; Revelation 21:9-14, 21-27

### The Holy City, the New Jerusalem

[Jesus said,] “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 ESV)

Dearly Beloved in Christ, the only Savior of the World:

Last week we went from the now to the new. We heard Jesus say, “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” (John 16:22). And, “Behold, I am making all things new.” (Rev. 21:5). We also heard of the new Jerusalem, the holy city coming down out of heaven from God.

This morning, we hear Jesus say, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:24), and “In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). With Jesus’ words in our minds and hearts, we get a view of what awaits us. We get a preview of the new Jerusalem and, as we do, we’ll see that there is no place else like it. And it’s good that we do because the new Jerusalem is our final destination. It’s where you and I are going to spend eternity. We are citizens of that holy city. Our citizenship has been bought and paid for with the blood of Christ.

Today, we get to see this city, along with St. John, who is being shown around the place: “Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me

away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.”

Wow! What a shining, glorious, brilliant city, the new Jerusalem is. A city full of light. “Jerusalem the Golden,” we call it. The beauty of this city will far surpass anything you have ever seen or anything you can imagine. It is a city of light, and the light brings to life all the brightest colors the eye can behold. Precious gems and jewels come the closest in our experience to approaching its beauty.

What else do we see? “It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . . And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.”

This city is safe, and it is secure. No attackers can mount its walls or break through its gates. The holy city is founded on the testimony of the twelve apostles, who bore witness to our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ. And the holy city is radiantly beautiful. Gates of pearl, streets of gold—you have never seen anything as thoroughly lovely as the heavenly home that awaits us.

It can’t be said enough that the holy city is a city of light. After all, the source of its light is the presence of God Himself: “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

God is dwelling in the midst of His people in this city. The temple served that purpose in the old Jerusalem. In the new Jerusalem, the whole city is like that. God’s presence shines throughout this city, down every street and into every corner. We will be at one with God,

finally. We will be at one with God fully, the way life is supposed to be. And that is great and glorious.

The Lamb is right there, too, at the center of things. The Lamb is the lamp of this city. Christ, crucified and risen, shining forth in all His glory as the Lamb of God, the Lamb who was slain and who now lives forever. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. He is also the light of heaven, the city of God.

And because the new Jerusalem is a city of light undiminished and unbroken: “There will be no night there.” In other words, the things that threaten us now, the things that endanger us will be no more. No more night. No more sin to darken our consciences. No more pain or grief to dim our joy. No more death to cast its long shadow over our lives. No, only light in this city, light that comes from God Himself.

So who would not want to live in this city, filled as it is with light and beauty and the very presence of God?

Yet, not everyone will be able to go there. The new Jerusalem is a holy city, you see. “The holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” Since it is a holy city, admission is strictly prohibited to all who do not meet God’s demanding standards: “But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

So, how about you? Do you qualify? Are you holy enough to live in the holy city? Not on your own, you’re not. You and I must admit that we do not have, as one hymn puts it, “those pure desires the spirit of the Law requires.” (LSB 555.2). We have not loved God with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We must confess that our hearts are impure. Our hands are unclean. Our deeds are all too often shameful and deceitful. We must admit that we are sinners. And so, on our own, we do not qualify to be admitted.

Are there any people who will be admitted into the holy city? Of course! But only those whose names are written in the book of life. In other words, only those with an advance reservation, as recorded in the official register of heaven, will be allowed in.

But now here is the Good News! That book with the names written in it is nothing other than “the Lamb’s book of life.” It is the register of all those who simply, humbly, trust in the Lamb to be their purity, to be their holiness.

And He is! Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We do not have any purity or holiness of our own. But Christ Jesus has written His righteousness into our account in the record book of heaven. He kept the Law purely and perfectly in our stead. He died on the cross as our substitute, suffering the full wrath of God over our sins. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain as the sacrifice for all sinners. He rose from the dead, and now this same Lord Jesus lives forever. He will welcome the faithful into the holy city. He gives life—new life, eternal life—to all His baptized believers. He has written their names into His book.

Do you trust in Him, the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ? Then rejoice! Rejoice that your names are written in heaven, written there in “the Lamb’s book of life.” Jesus has made the advance reservation for you. You and I are in His party, and He has already taken care of the bill. Yes, Jesus Christ is our life, our purity, and our holiness. He is the one who, by His holiness, makes us holy. So, He is the only way for us to enter the holy city. He is the way, the truth, and the life, life everlasting.

The new Jerusalem, the city that St. John saw, is a holy city, inhabited by those made holy by the blood of the Lamb. It is a city of light, with the glory of God’s presence shining throughout. And this city is going to be our home for all eternity. For we are those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. Beloved, we have a home waiting for us, the holy city, the new Jerusalem! Rejoice with a joy so full that it will never end, for Jesus has overcome the world.

Jerusalem the golden,

With milk and honey blest—

The promise of salvation,  
The place of peace and rest—  
We know not, oh, we know not  
What joys await us there;  
The radiancy of glory,  
The bliss beyond compare! (LSB 672.1)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener